



BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Academic Affairs Committee

December 18, 2025, 9:00 a.m.

Minutes

Loughman Living Room, Scanlon Hall

A live stream of the meeting for public viewing will also take place at the following link: <https://www.westfield.ma.edu/live>

MEMBERS PRESENT: Committee Chair Chris Montemayor, Secretary Barney Garcia, Trustee Michael O'Rourke, Trustee William Reichelt, and Board Chair Ali Salehi, ex-officio member.

MEMBERS PARTICIPATING REMOTELY: Vice Chair Jason Queenin, and Trustee George Gilmer.

Also present and participating are Westfield State University President, Dr. Linda Thompson; Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs Dr. William Salka; Office of Institutional Research and Assessment Executive Director, Jeff Xavier; and Assistant Director of Student Success Analytics, Melanie Gaudet.

Committee Chair Montemayor called the meeting to order at 9:00 AM and a roll call was taken of the committee members participating as listed above. It was announced that the meeting was being livestreamed and recorded.

MOTION made by Trustee Garcia and seconded by Trustee O'Rourke to approve the minutes of the October 21, 2025 meeting. There being no discussion, **ROLL CALL VOTE**, motion passed.

Persistence and Retention 2015-2024

- Data is linked to the Huron project and should be available for the board at the February meeting.
- This data will help answer questions about retention, persistence, and other measures of student success.
- This presentation addresses enrollment and retention questions, examines statewide trends of state universities and focuses on first-time student cohorts at Westfield State University

First-Time Cohorts

- Focuses on first-time cohorts because they all start in the same place.
- It avoids problems of varying starting points with transfer and continuing students.
- It also looks at special support programs.

- It aims to identify available tools and ways to answer other questions.
- Analysis of Westfield State's first-time cohort shows a similar pattern to the admitted applicants, with higher percentages in both high and low GPA bands and less in the middle.
- Bringing in more students in the lower GPA band will affect outcomes, requiring extra support for those less prepared.

State University Enrollment Trends

- Data from the CARES system shows overall enrollment of undergraduates.
- Six state universities are included, excluding UMass schools.
- Westfield State University is represented by the thick blue line. (see Undergraduate, Enrollment, Persistence, and Retention PowerPoint).
- There has been a drop in overall undergraduate enrollment across state universities.

Enrollment Stabilization

- Enrollment appears to have stabilized around 2022.
- "If we had the 2025 number on there, it would continue. It would look about the same as kind of a flat, maybe slightly increasing line."
- Stability may make revenue predictions more straightforward.
- Stability is anticipated, but the population of traditional college students is expected to decline.

New Programs and Initiatives

- There are plans to bring new programs online to attract new students.
- A new building for life sciences is planned, including nursing, physician assistants, and clinical work.
- There were also three new master's programs that were approved by the board.
- The goal is to attract new students based on workforce needs.

Program Review and Adaptation

- Programs that are not attracting students will not be invested in.
- The board will review programs and make necessary changes for student success.
- There is a need to react to offering too many programs.
- The trend gives a good idea of overall volatility historically.

Stabilization & Enrollment

- Trustee Alvarado's question about stabilization is welcome, especially given reports of an impending "cliff."
- Enrollment decreases in recent years are attributed to COVID-19 impacts on undergraduate admissions across universities.
- Incoming students in the next few years will have experienced disruptions in their K-12 education due to COVID-19.

High School GPA Analysis

- Analysis of high school GPAs of admitted applicants over a 10-year period reveals a "bifurcation," with fewer students in the middle GPA range and more at the top, particularly at UMass Amherst.
- It's difficult to determine if UMass Amherst's admission policies are drawing students away from state universities.

- Westfield State University is following the trend of more admitted students in the high GPA band, but there's also an increase in the lowest GPA band, unlike other state universities.
- The speaker notes, "this shrinking middle is evident kind of across the state university system and here at Westfield State University for high school GPA."

GPA Thresholds & Inclusivity

- There's a potential opportunity to provide support for students with lower academic preparedness, aligning with the goal of becoming a more inclusive university.
- UMass Amherst's undergraduate admission numbers have remained consistent at about 20,000 per year.
- Data presented is based on admitted applicants, not necessarily enrolled students.
- Admitting students with lower GPAs is good, but higher dropout rates disproportionately affect retention numbers.

Retention Rates

- Retention rate is defined as the percentage of a first-time cohort that re-enrolls the following year.
- Overall, retention rates at state universities in Massachusetts show a slight downward trend from 2015 to 2023-2024.
- Westfield State's retention rate has been relatively stable and is in the middle compared to other state universities.

Special Support Programs

- The data breaks down the first-time cohort based on special support programs (FACES, Lead, Urban Ed, TRIO, learning disabilities, and veteran/military students).
- Outcomes for students in support programs are generally comparable to the overall first-time population, suggesting the programs are beneficial.
- There is ambiguity in tagging students in programs like FACES and TRIO, requiring further investigation.
 - FACES has evolved over time.
 - TRIO students may not all receive the same level of support.
- Veteran and military students often have more experience, leading to more favorable outcomes, but the numbers are small.

Retention Rates

- There is about a 15% drop from fall to spring persistence.
- There is another 15% drop from the first spring to the second fall.

Improving Data Analysis

- There is a need to become more precise in identifying dosage, student engagement, and program nuances.
- Defining student populations, like veterans and military services, allows for individualized analysis and reflects the support provided.
- Data shows how critical it is for first-semester students to be engaged and able to access support systems.
- Presentation given to the cabinet evolved after the cabinet meeting.
- GPA breakdown of overall students, first-time students, and students in support programs.

- Students from fall 22 through fall 24 were grouped together due to low numbers.
- Lower retention among those with 3.5 GPAs and above versus some in the middle.
 - It was asked where students that aren't retained going, and if they are going to comparable institutions?
 - National student clearinghouse data can potentially provide answers.
- Outcome data can be viewed by looking at the overall enrolled population versus the first-time population.
 - Persistence means re-enrolled in the subsequent term/fall or graduated within that time period.
 - Higher persistence rates point to students who have been around for a while tending to stick around.
 - Most attrition occurs within the first year.
- Overlap/duplication of students in programs.
 - Numbers are not mutually exclusive.
 - Among 719 first-time students in one or more programs: 622 in one program, 867 in two programs, and 10 in three programs.

Item for Action

- Dr. Stephen Adams, Professor of English.
 - Made contributions to the Department of English, the Westfield State community, and the field of 18th-century literature.
 - Co-founder of the International English Honor Society and led the University Honors program.
 - Served as Dean of faculty.
- Professor Jamie Wainwright, Professor of Art.
 - Developed new courses and adopted innovative tools for art making.
 - Won the Massachusetts Colleges Online Course of Distinction award.
 - Artwork is part of over 25 prominent collections across the United States.

MOTION made by Trustee O'Rourke and seconded by Trustee Garcia, The Academic Affairs Committee recommends to the full Board of Trustees: To approve the granting of Faculty Emeritus/a status, effective December 18, 2025, to the following individuals: Dr. Stephen Adams, English and Ms. Jamie Wainwright, Art. There being no discussion, **ROLL CALL VOTE**, motion passed unanimously.

There being no further discussion,

MOTION made by Trustee Reichelt and seconded by Trustee Queenin to adjourn the meeting. There being no discussion, **ROLL CALL VOTE**, motion passed by majority.

Meeting adjourned at 9:42 AM.

Attachments presented at this meeting:

- a. Minutes of October 21, 2025
- b. Power Point Persistence and Retention
- c. Motion: Faculty Emeritus/a – Dr. Stephen Adams and Ms. Jamie Wainwright

d. Faculty Emeritus/a supporting letter

Secretary's Certificate

I hereby certify that the foregoing is a true and correct copy of the approved minutes of the Westfield State University Board of Trustees Academic Affairs Committee meeting held on December 18, 2025.

Barney Garcia, Secretary

Date